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L E T T E R  
TO THE HONOURABLE  
The Directors of the East-India Company,  
FROM  
Major General JAMES STUART.  
[ July 26th, 1784. ]

Q. J. T. E. H.

The Directors of the East India Company





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GENTLEMEN,

ON Friday the 16th instant I had the honour to receive the Letter of that date from your secretary Mr. Morton, wrote by your command in answer to mine of the 27th May.

At the same time I was favoured with the Papers referred to in Mr. Morton's Letter ; for which communication I beg leave to return you my very sincere thanks.

On the perusal of the Letter with which you have honoured me, I assure you, Gentlemen, that I was much mortified at your seeming disapprobation of the style and manner of the requisitions which I took the liberty of making. Permit me, therefore, to say in general, that it was my intention, as it was my duty, to avoid offence, and to testify every degree of respect.—I have been unfortunate if that intention has not been properly executed, but I really flattered myself that I had made my Letter, and the requests it contained, as unexceptionable as possible ; and I beg leave only to add, that if you had done me the honour to point out any expressions that were improper, my apology should have been still more particular.

I hope you will rest assured, that if any thing should ever escape from me, that might even seem to be wanting in deference, it can proceed only from that anxiety and earnestness which are the unavoidable consequences of my present and peculiar situation, and not from any disrespect or diffidence towards those in whose service I have had, I hope not undeservedly, the honour to be employed.

Under the protection of this apology I flatter myself, Gentlemen, that I may be allowed to observe to you without offence, that the meaning of a very material part of my Letter has, I apprehend, been misunderstood.

The particular to which I allude is this :

You are pleased to observe by Mr. Morton's Letter, " that you cannot refrain from expressing your surprize at my *so solemnly declaring myself ignorant of the causes* which produced my dismissal from the service of the Company in India, the subsequent arrest of my person, and the measures afterwards adopted to send me from Madras to England."

It is further said in the Letter, that " you observe that the charges of misconduct were made in Minutes of Lord Macartney president of the Select Committee, replied to in Minutes by myself, who appeared to have been present in person when the motion for dismissing me from the service had passed, &c."

By these paragraphs you seem to think I had asserted that no information was communicated, and no reasons whatever were assigned to me by the Select Committee for *any part* of their conduct towards me; and particularly, that I had asserted or insinuated my ignorance of that Minute of Lord Macartney (of the 17th September 1783), which stated what he was pleased to call his reasons for the measure of dismissing me from the service of the East India Company.

If indeed I had been capable of making such assertion, or had pretended ignorance of papers which were in my possession, and what is more, which I was certain *you knew* to be in my possession, I shall readily admit that there would not only have been reason for your expressing surprize at such conduct, but that you would have been well entitled to have employed the severest terms in the expression of your indignation; the dissingenuity of such an attempt on my part could  
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only have been equalled by the gross and palpable folly and absurdity of it.

For, at the very time when I addressed to you my Letter of the 27th May, I knew with perfect certainty, that the evidence of my having received upon the 25th of September a copy of Lord Macartney's Minute of the 17th of that Month, was not only in the possession of the Select Committee at Madras, and of the Supreme Council in Bengal, but that it was likewise in your possession at the India House, in consequence of my earnest requisition to both these Governments that they should *forthwith* transmit to you copies of every paper concerning me, and of every letter that had passed in correspondence between the Select Committee and me in the months of September and October last; which papers I actually knew were accordingly transmitted, and had been received at the India House even in duplicates and triplicates.

I knew perfectly that the correspondence and papers which you had thus received, and particularly my Letters to the Select Committee of the 25th and 30th of September, ascertained precisely what papers and information I had received, and what I had not received: that they confirmed, on the one hand, my assertion with regard to the state of ignorance in which I was kept as to the causes and motives of the *personal outrages* I had suffered; and, on the other hand, contained the most explicit and direct acknowledgment of my having received a copy of the President's Minute of the 17th September, stating the reasons which he was pleased to assign for my dismissal from the service.

After this, to have endeavoured, by assertion or insinuation on my part, to convey to you, Gentlemen, an impression that I had never seen that Minute, or that I was ignorant of the contents of it, would have been an attempt that nothing short of a state of insanity could have justified.

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The complaints in my Letter to you of the 27th of May, respecting the want of information, and my solemn declaration, did not relate to the step taken by the Select Committee on the 17th of September, in dismissing me from the service, but merely to the acts of violence and outrage which succeeded that measure,—acts which had no necessary connection with the dismissal, which will require quite another sort of justification, and stand upon grounds totally separate and distinct.

I cannot help persuading myself, Gentlemen, that, on a re-perusal of my Letter, it will appear evident to what points my declaration of total ignorance *does* apply, and to what it does *not* apply ; to what objects it *extended*, and to what objects it was *confined*.

It did not extend to my receiving *no* information of the motives which Lord Macartney had assigned for dismissing me from the service : These motives, in so far as they had been imperfectly specified in his Minute of the 17th of September, were not only known to me, but had been answered by me in a paper of considerable length, intitled, *State of Facts*, purposely and professedly wrote in answer to the charges of disobedience of orders or misconduct, alleged in Lord Macartney's Minute, which *State of Facts* was accompanied with an Appendix, that contained a copy of that very Minute, with my marginal comments upon it, and was delivered in by me to the Select Committee at Madras, on the 10th day of October last ; a duplicate of it was also sent to the Supreme Council at Bengal ; and both these Governments were earnestly requested by me, to take the first opportunity of forwarding that paper to the Court of Directors.

But why I was arrested and confined as a prisoner, why I was not suffered to continue in the settlement, even though I had offered security for the preservation of the public peace ; why I was forcibly embarked, and ordered to proceed to England, and that too on board a ship which had little probability of reaching England—These are the points



points on which I *declared myself ignorant*, and on which I again repeat my solemn declaration, that I had no information whatsoever, notwithstanding repeated efforts on my part to obtain from the Select Committee some precise specific answers on those points.

That my declaration in the Letter of the 27th of May related solely to the *personal outrages* which had been committed against me, is still further evident, from the expressions made use of in that part of the Letter itself, where *outrages* is the only word with which my declaration stands connected;—but if there could be any ambiguity in that phrase, the three paragraphs which immediately precede that which contains the declaration, must serve to put the matter beyond a doubt, particularly that paragraph which contains an *enumeration* of the various severities and outrages complained of, and which begins with these words :

“ Neither the persons who violently seized me at my Country House  
“ on Choultry Plain, nor those who detained me prisoner in the Fort  
“ at Madras,” &c.

In this enumeration, and with which my declaration about being totally uninformed, stands singly and inseparably connected, there is not one word said about the act of dismissing me from the service, for that act was felt to be of a very different description from the *outrage* of depriving me of my *liberty*; and the same paragraph which contains the enumeration shews in express words, that my complaint, for want of information, was specifically confined to the grounds and pretences for the outrages and the *loss of my liberty*.—The words are,  
“ When I applied to the Government at Madras for their charges  
“ against me, and for the grounds and pretences under which they  
“ acted, in *depriving me of my personal liberty*, I never was able to  
“ obtain any satisfaction on those points,” &c.

I have thus endeavoured to satisfy you, Gentlemen, with regard to the true construction of my Letter, and of the solemn declaration  
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which it contained; and I flatter myself, that I have succeeded in establishing two things:—1st, That from the nature and circumstances of the case itself, it was impossible my declaration could have any other meaning than that which I have stated:—2dly, That the expressions used in making that declaration, especially when connected with the paragraphs which immediately preceded it, fixed and ascertained beyond a doubt its true extent, and shewed that it related solely to the unknown motives and causes of the personal outrages, particularly the unwarrantable violence in depriving me of liberty; but that it had no reference or relation whatsoever to my not being informed of the reasons given for my dismissal from the service.

It remains for me only to request your indulgence for the unavoidable length of this explanation.—The duty which I owe both to you and to myself has made me feel it as a matter of serious importance, that I should remove the imputation, or even the suspicion of concealing from you the receipt of information which I had actually received; which concealment must have been as foolish as unjustifiable, because it could not possibly have answered any purpose, but to draw upon me the imputation of presuming to harass you with unnecessary or ill-founded applications.

To avoid the possibility of any future mistakes, I shall here beg leave to mention explicitly what part of the contents of the papers with which you have now been pleased to favour me, had been communicated, or withheld by the Select Committee at Madras.

The papers which accompanied your Secretary's letter are five in number, *viz.*

No. 1. Proceedings of the President and Select Committee of Madras upon Major General Stuart's dismissal. 17th September 1783.

No. 2. Resolutions and Orders of the Select Committee for the Arrest of Major General Stuart. 17th September 1783.

No. 3.



No. 3. Lieutenant Gomond's Report of his executing the Orders for the Arrest.

No. 4. Resolutions of the Select Committee, dated 23d September 1783, for sending Major General Stuart to England.

No. 5. Instructions for that purpose given by the Select Committee to the Town Major, and to the Captain of the Packet, dated 13th October 1783.

These papers I have carefully perused; and that it may be known with certainty which of them contain Information that is entirely new to me, I now venture to assure you with great confidence, that neither the papers No. 2, 3, 4, and 5, nor the information they contain, ever were communicated to me, either by the Select Committee, or by any person whatsoever, though I often required such Information, both from the Committee, and from those who carried their orders into execution. In proof of this assertion, I appeal to the whole of my Correspondence (now in your possession at the India House) between the Select Committee and me in the months of September and October last, and particularly to my letter to them of the 30th of September.

It is by your favour, Gentlemen, that I have now, for the first time, been indulged with the perusal of papers which so nearly concern me, and which afford me the first certain information that I have ever received of the grounds on which the President and Select Committee at Madras had proceeded in the measure of depriving me of my *personal liberty*, and in the subsequent acts of violence; and on that account I feel it to be peculiarly incumbent on me to express my sincere thanks to you for the communication of papers containing such material and authentic information.

With regard to the Paper No. 1, which states the proceedings of the 17th September, relating to my dismissal from the service, the information contained in Lord Macartney's Minute, which makes part of these proceedings, is *not new* to me; but the contents of that very

paper suggested and proved the necessity of my applying for further and fuller information, even with regard to the reasons given for my dismissal from the service.

If I can satisfy you, Gentlemen, that this is a true and exact representation of the case, it must tend equally to justify the application I have already made, and to support that which I am going to make, and therefore I must beg leave to point out to you in what respects the communication afforded to me was incomplete and imperfect even on the subject of the dismissal; in doing which, it will be necessary to state, but as briefly as possible, the circumstances under which that communication was granted.

The Minute of Lord Macartney, the President, which was the foundation on which the resolution for my dismissal from the service, was rapidly taken on the 17th of September, was, *I admit*, read over in my presence that day, but without either supplying me with a copy of it, or suffering me to have any opportunity to answer it, till long after the resolution for my dismissal had been completely carried into effect.

The fact is, that on the morning of the 17th September I was summoned, as usual, to a meeting of the Select Committee on military affairs, to be held that day at noon, but without any manner of intimation of what was intended at that meeting, and without my having any suspicion of it.

Lord Macartney entered the Council Room at One o'clock, and soon after pulled out of his pocket the ready prepared Minute, of considerable length, which was read in my presence.

Being totally unprepared for this unexpected attack, I requested to have a copy of the Minute, and insisted that nothing should be done upon it until I should have an opportunity of giving in an Answer to that elaborate paper which attacked me so personally.

This request was positively refused; and the few words which I had time to utter, in the very short interval between the reading of the President's



President's Minute, and the vote for dismissal, were totally disregarded.

As the operations had been all pre-concerted, very little time indeed was spent in deliberation; for immediately after reading the Minute, the vote for my dismissal was put and carried by what is called the unanimous resolution of the Select Committee; that is to say, the resolution of Lord Macartney, Mr. Sadler, Mr. Davidson, and Mr. Williams.

From the President's entering the room at One o'clock to the conclusion, the whole time consumed in reading the Minute, in deliberation, and in voting a resolution which was to deprive me of the command of the army, and to dismiss me from the service, did not exceed 28 minutes.

It was not till the 25th of September, when I had been nine days a prisoner, that a copy of the President's Minute of the 17th, was, upon my repeated applications, furnished to me; but even then they refused giving me any copy of the proceedings of the Select Committee, in consequence of the President's Minute; neither did I receive from any quarter, till now, a copy of these proceedings.

In the President's Minute communicated to me, which was professedly drawn up for the purpose of criminating me, by an investigation of my conduct during many months, and for the purpose of justifying the measure resolved upon, of dismissing me from the service, Lord Macartney, after enumerating various cases in which he alleged that I had been guilty of disobedience to the orders of Government, concludes that enumeration by a reference to instances of disobedience of orders, *not specified* in the Minute itself, but of which he was to give a particular detail in his dispatches to the Court of Directors. The words in his Minute are: "And in various other cases of which the Committee have too strong a remembrance to render the detail necessary to them, but *shall be particularized in the dispatches to the Court of Directors.*"

It was this paragraph in the President's Minute, and the knowledge I had from different quarters, that the detail thus announced had actually been sent to the Court of Directors by Lord Macartney, that made me desirous, at the time of addressing to you my Letter of the 29th May, to obtain communication, not only of the causes and motives of the *personal outrages* which had been totally concealed from me, but also to obtain information of every thing that Lord Macartney had sent home, even on the subject of my dismissal.

With this view I mentioned, in the beginning of my Letter of the 27th May, that it was necessary " I should have communication *of the accounts sent home to you from India*, specifying the grounds on which the President and Select Committee thought themselves authorized to dismiss me not only from the Command in Chief of the Company's troops, and from my seat in the Select Committee, but also from the Command in Chief of the King's troops."

The very object of this request in my Letter of the 27th May, was to reach that narrative or account sent home by Lord Macartney, which had been formally announced in his Minute, and in which I was well informed, that he had stated to the Court of Directors, at great length, his accusations against me.

This request for the communication of the account or letter thus sent home by Lord Macartney to the Court of Directors I beg leave now to repeat; and I hope, Gentlemen, that in every point of view it will appear to you reasonable that such communication should be granted.

Ist, Because by the reference in Lord Macartney's Minute to various cases not specified, and in which he alleged that I had disobeyed the orders of Government, he himself has established a necessary connection between his Minute, in which no mention was made of the particulars of these cases, and the Narrative or Account sent home by him to the Court of Directors, in which he engaged to specify the particular detail of these instances of disobedience of orders.

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If I was justly entitled to have a Copy of the Minute itself, I apprehend I must be equally well intitled to have a copy of the detailed Account or Letter referred to in that Minute ; the object of both was to criminate me, and to fix upon me, from various specific instances, a charge of disobedience of orders ; but the information conveyed by the one is evidently incomplete, without my having the benefit also of that contained in the other ; and this in effect is admitted by Lord Macartney himself.

2dly, The necessity of this communication of Lord Macartney's Letter, founded on the reference to it in his own Minute, is still further fortified and confirmed by the nature and circumstances of the case itself in other respects : The charge of disobedience to the orders of government is a very serious charge, and has been made the ground or pretence of a very severe and very mortifying measure, that of depriving me of the Chief Command of the Company's Forces, and of dismissing me altogether from the service. It is not possible for me to give a complete answer to this charge, nor to remove the impressions which such representations of my conduct may have made upon your minds to my prejudice, unless I am furnished with the particulars of all the instances in which my accusers pretend that I have been guilty of such disobedience ; it is impossible to give a particular answer to imputations contained in a paper which is not communicated, and which are referred to only in general terms in the paper which is communicated.

However necessary what I now ask may be, for enabling me to supply you with that complete justification of myself which it may be my duty to submit to your consideration, when once I have learnt the total extent of the charges against me ; yet I beg leave to assure you, Gentlemen, that I am far from wishing to put you under any difficulties, by asking for letters or papers which may contain other matters than those which immediately concern me, or matters which you may judge improper to be communicated. To satisfy you of the sincerity  
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of that disposition, while I wish anxiously for the knowledge of every thing that has been written by Lord Macartney in which I am ever so remotely concerned, yet I am very willing that my request for the communication of the accounts sent home by his Lordship shall be restricted to such parts as you shall judge material for enabling me to make my defence or justification complete.

I am further encouraged to hope for success in this request, from a very favourable paragraph in your letter, in which you have been pleased to inform me, " That whenever I should think it necessary to " apply for *any other specific papers*, you would take my application " into consideration, with every disposition to a reasonable compliance " with my requests.

For this very obliging intimation I feel myself much indebted, and beg leave to return my most grateful and sincere acknowledgments; and to assure you that I have the honour be at all times, with great truth,

GENTLEMEN,-

ARLINGTON-STREET,  
July 26, 1784.

Your most faithful and

obedient humble servant,

(Signed) JAMES STUART.